

EDITORIAL.

THE leading article in the *Popular Science Monthly* for February, bears the sonorous title, "Vegetation a remedy for the summer heat of cities. A plea for the cultivation of trees, shrubs, plants, vines, and grasses in the streets of New York, for the improvement of the public health, for the comfort of summer residents, and for ornamentation."

Science,
falsely
so called

With tree planting in cities the *BOTANICAL GAZETTE* is in warmest sympathy, but the arguments advanced by Stephen Smith, M.D., LL.D., "to revive the project of giving the Department of Parks jurisdiction over the trees in the streets, and require it to plant and cultivate additional vegetation" are calculated to astonish the botanist, and make him grieve over the popular inculcation of such ridiculous physiology. "The real problem to be solved may be thus stated. How can the temperature of the city of New York be modified during the summer months?" According to the writer trees can do this, because "forests and even single trees tend to equalize temperature, preventing extremes both in summer and winter." This they do "through their own inherent warmth, which always remains at a fixed standard both in summer and winter." Then, since "the vaporization of liquids is a frigorific process," and plants "emit into the atmosphere considerable quantities of water vapor," it is evident that "vegetation tends powerfully to cool the atmosphere during a summer day." Since "man may live in close proximity to marshes from which arises the most dangerous malaria with the utmost impunity [bold, bad malaria!], provided a grove intervene between his home and the marsh," it is fortunate that "at the period of the day when malaria and mephitic gases are emitted in the greatest quantity and activity, this function of vegetation is most active and powerful."

It is greatly to be regretted that such utterly erroneous conceptions of the work of plants, of which the above are only samples, should find publication at all, and much more that they should appear in a journal which speaks in the name of science, as the *Popular Science Monthly* claims to do. Or must "popular science" be considered merely a pseudonym for grotesque or sentimental fol-de-rol?